Gillon has to rest, Glover needed hypnosis...

PURPLE BATTLE AGAINST ILL HEALTH

AFTER A BAD patch towards the end of '71 — when lead singer Ian Gillan was ordered to rest, and the band had to cancel an American tour — Deep Purple are back again. They've completed a short tour and almost ready is their next album 'Machine Head', expected to release in March. This week NME's Julie Webb spoke to bassist Roger Glover — a lesser-known quantity in Purple, because he does few interviews, but an interesting and articulate person just the same . . . .

Q: How has Ian Gillan's illness affected Purple: I understand he now has to rest considerably.

A: "Ian's illness, hepetitus, was complicated with jaundice. His only cure is rest. We layed off for four or five weeks, and now Ian's got to take it very carefully. He can't lift anything now — not even a suitcase. But as long as he gets rest, he'll be fine. Apart from that the band is very happy together."

Was it ever suggested you bring in a temporary replacement?

"No, we never even considered getting another singer in — no one suggested that. Mind you, a few people outside the band suggested we do some gigs without him. As it was, they almost had to force us on stage in Chicago without him.

"I think the rest period was very important, in that when you rest you think much more clearly. The resulting album, 'Machine Head', was 100 per cent better as a result.

Was there any special reason for recording the album in Switzerland, which I understand to be the case?

"No — we chose Switzerland to record the album simply for business reasons. It wasn't cheaper, or anything like that. We hired the Stone's mobile, and that isn't cheap. And by the time you add up things, like hotel bills, it works out pretty expensive. I'd hazard a guess at £8,000 — as compared to the last one, which cost around the £6,000 mark.

"Getting the Stones' mobile was our idea — we'd heard it was a good one, and it cost us around £5,000 for the time we had it. We recorded the tracks from December 6th to 21st, working at least twelve hours a day, and the whole thing was mixed in three days.

"You know, it's a bit sick how people spend thousands and thousands of pounds building a recording studio, when we got the right sound in the corridor of a hotel. We hired a whole floor of the place. And had mattresses up in the windows to avoid people outside from complaining about the sound."

Why write most of your numbers actually in the Studio. Surely it must work out expensive.

Relaxed

"When we make an album we've got to be happy and relaxed, and if you've got hassles of getting equipment in from a rehearsal room, it doesn't help. It's worth the extra money we spend in studio time, just to be able to avoid the hassles."

Is it always a joint group venture, writing a number?

"Officially it's a five-way split when we write, but different people contribute different things to different songs. We know who wrote what, but I don't think it's apparent to the listener.

"For example, 'Fireball' was written mainly by Richie, John and Ian. The basic ideas usually stem from Richie and myself.

"On the new album I got most of my ideas during the four weeks off, just because I was able to take time off and listen to some music and also drive around in my car and relax.

On the lyrics side, sometimes Ian Gillan will do them on his own, or we'll get together. With one particular track on the new album, 'Smoke On The Water', that particular phrase just came to me. My first thought was to write it myself as a folk song.

"I mentioned the idea to Ian, and no more was said until we came to write the lyrics of a song in the studio. So that's how that number came about."

Isn't it annoying, for those of you who contribute more than others', to still have this five-way-split on the songwriting side?

"Sometimes I feel I'd like more credit for some of the stuff I do, but the decision to split it five ways was made ages ago before "Deep Purple In Rock." That's because our music is basically the result of a jam session. I think it avoids friction this way, though I can't say it won't in the future. As soon as money comes into it, people change. Some for the better — some for the worse."

So many groups split because of personality clashes, and as a group you all seem of incredibly different personalities. How have you managed to stay together so amicably?

"We're pretty polite to one another, although I admit that can be a bad thing. Bad in that if you have a grudge against someone else, you don't always come out with it."

Do you socialise with each other?

"The only one I socialise with is Ian Paice, simply because we live together. Certainly we're the two best people in the group to live together, the bass player and drummer. More in sympathy with one another.

I've learnt a lot from Ian. He's forever practising, and he'll play records of drummers and players that turn him on, and I'll buy records by people who turn me on. So we both hear all kinds of different music and musicians."

You said earlier that the new album was 100 per cent better. How then does it compare with 'Fireball'?

"The feeling in the group is that 'Machine Head' is the best album we've ever made. When you look back, 'Deep Purple In Rock' was a good album that said everything we wanted to say — it also had a lot of fire. 'Fireball', was made in between tours. We didn't have a month off before, like we had with this album, and at times we'd be sitting in the studio desperate for ideas. The end result was technically better than 'Rock', but it didn't have that inner spark.

"Machine Head' is technically one step further than 'Fireball', plus it has that inner spark."

Future

Have you any thoughts for the immediate future of just becoming a recording group, as opposed to a band who tours most of the time?

"I don't know how long we'll go on for, but speaking personally I couldn't be happier in the band than I am now. We still enjoy playing — and when we go on tour, the most enjoyable thing is the actual playing on stage. Sure we drink, and go to clubs and bars, but we try not to drink too much before we go on stage. You've got to look after yourself.

"We always have one drink before we go out there, just to loosen us up and take any worries away we may have. But heavy drinking — if at all — is done on a night off in a club."

Bassman Roger Glover

Obviously health is an all important factor, certainly since Ian's illness . . .

"Oh yes — and six months ago there were some rumours circulating around about me leaving the group because of illness. Every time we went on stage, I had a bad pain where my appendix scar was. I spent a lot of money going to various doctors to find out what it was, but none of them could tell me.

"It got to the stage, in fact, where I was seriously thinking I'd have to leave the band because literally the pain was so bad I was doubled on stage.

Anyway, my doctor suggested hypnosis, and after several treatments it worked. I've never had any trouble since."

Being part of a band like Purple must obviously have it's financial advantages. Do you know how much you, or the band is worth?

"As a group we're probably one of the best paid. For an English gig we get around £1,000, and although that sounds a lot, you've got to realise it costs us that a week just to run our business. The expenses are enormous.

"We all pay individually for our own instruments, and every six months we go and see our group accountant and he tells us how much money we have. We started off in the red — our management put £20,000 into the group, and it took us till the end of '70 for us to pay it off.

"My only thoughts are how incredibly lucky I am. I buy a lot of records, and I have good stereo equipment, but I haven't really spent that much money. If I'm in a restaurant somewhere, I always want to buy everyone I'm with a meal.

"The most expensive thing I've bought is my house in Iver, which I'm hoping to move into soon. Ian Paice is the only one who hasn't bought a house now — I think he's waiting for somewhere like Buckingham Palace.

"Obviously, money invested in a house is well spent, but apart from that I like to paint — not very often, just for a few days in bursts — so one of my bedrooms is going to be a studio. A studio come darkroom actually, because I'm also interested in photography. I've recently bought a good camera. It's something I want to take up seriously."

You were going to take up a career in art at one time — do you ever regret your decision?

"No — not at all. Whilst I was at school I made my decision to be an artist, and towards the latter end of my schooling, after two years at art college, I became pretty disillusioned. I gathered I couldn't become an artist simply because I was told I didn't have enough O levels.

"As it was, I had to do a vocational course, and I started doing interior design. After a while I decided to sling it in favour of being in a group, but everyone else said I'd be an idiot to give it up. Whilst I was deciding, I had a nervous breakdown.

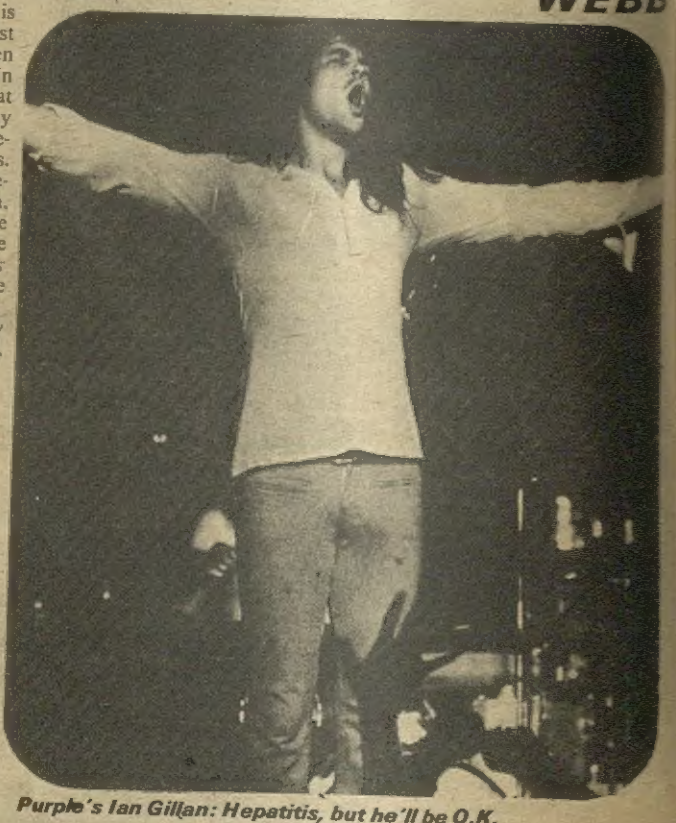
"I remember there was a woman teacher at college who helped me a lot by saying 'don't do what you think you ought to do — do what you want to do. Then if it turns out wrongly, you won't have any regrets.'

"So I took her advice, and I've always gone by what she said then. I've learned that whatever happens, whatever I do, regret never changes anything.

"I seem to have found happiness within myself.

"No matter what goes wrong, it never affects my happiness."

By JULIE WEBB



Purple's Ian Gillan: Hepatitis, but he'll be O.K.

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